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**THE MACROLEPIDOPTERA OF BANFFSHIRE:  
2nd SUPPLEMENT**

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*Whitewells, Ordiquhill, Cornhill, Banffshire AB45 2HS.*

INCREASINGLY, recorders in English and Welsh counties are publishing atlases of their butterflies and moths – a welcome trend. Such a course is impractical in the less well-populated parts of the British Isles, where not only are there few observers to provide the data, but the potential sales of such a volume might be calculated in single figures. For vice-counties like Banffshire, it is only through the pages of scientific journals that the information contained in field notebooks can be given a more permanent form, and reach a wider audience.

Barbour (1976) published the first list of the macrolepidoptera of Banffshire, comprising 256 moths and 22 butterflies. A supplement (Leverton, 1993) added 36 moths and three butterflies. As the vice-county becomes better known, the rate of new discoveries has inevitably slowed. Even so, this second supplement adds a further 19 moths, but deletes one species on the original list, giving a total of 310 moths and 25 butterflies. There are still some obvious gaps, especially among the coastal moths.

Until recently, there was no collated list of Banffshire microlepidoptera. However, the Aberdeenshire recorders, R.M. Palmer and M.R. Young, kindly allowed themselves to be persuaded to take on Banffshire microlepidoptera too. Notebook searches coupled with increased fieldwork have already revealed around 250 species, with many more awaited. A full list of all Lepidoptera recorded in north-east Scotland (VCs 91-94, Kincardineshire, South Aberdeenshire, North Aberdeenshire and Banffshire) is available from R.M. Palmer, Greenburn Cottage, Bucksburn, Aberdeen AB21 9UA.

Underworked counties such as ours welcome records submitted by visiting recorders, who were responsible for several of the new discoveries in the present supplement. Naturally enough, most of these visitors come in the hope of seeing the Scottish specialities, but it is unfortunate that a few do not always pay close attention to moths which are not among their targets. Sometimes we receive lists which include unlikely species, well outside their known British range. When the observer is made aware of this, and asked for further details, the record is hastily withdrawn, with the explanation "I didn't really look at it – it wasn't one I needed." Indeed, I have twice been in the field with highly respected visitors and seen them barely glance at a moth, then misidentify it as something not yet on the Banffshire list. Had I not been there, such records might well have been accepted as genuine. So please, be meticulous!

A further source of confusion is the tendency up here for moths to differ in appearance and emergence dates from their conspecifics further south. Having warned others of this pitfall in the earlier supplement, it was galling to stumble into it myself. Every June and July I searched the sallow carr for *Eupithecia tenuiata*, puzzled at being unable to find it in what seemed entirely suitable habitat. Every

August, a small, weakly marked, very grey pug appeared about mid-month, often at sugar with the common *Xanthia* species. I recorded it as a partial second brood of *E. subfuscata*. After seven years, the penny dropped. Oh well, we all make mistakes! Presumably this was the large grey form of *E. tenuiata* named *cinerae* Gregson, mentioned by South (1908) as occurring in neighbouring Moray.

The overlapping of species whose emergences are separated by many weeks further south is especially striking here in years with cold, late springs. Thus in 1996, *Orthosia incerta* just made it into June, while *Anticlea badiata* was seen up to the 10th of that month. The last *Apamea sordens* (15 August) overlapped by two days with the first of the *Xanthia togata*. The first *Aporophyla nigra* and last *Thyatira batis* were seen on the same date (21 August), with a perfectly fresh male *Cucullia umbratica* the next night. One year, I expect to find the July Highflyer *Hydriomena furcata* and the December Moth *Poecilocampa populi* in the trap together, having missed this by only three days in 1994 (9 and 12 October respectively).

Even after living here for eight years, it is hard to readjust when species previously thought of as rarities are now among the commonest, and *vice versa*. Going to draw the blinds one cold but still evening (15.x.94), I noticed 16 small triangles on the kitchen window. Every one was a *Chloroclysta miata*. Light trapping in the garden a week later produced a catch of 30 *C. siterata* showing great variety of colour and marking. Such numbers at least give plenty of practice at separating the two (size and wing shape being particularly useful). Many female *C. siterata* lack any trace of red, while a few *C. miata* are flushed with pink.

Among the migrants, the pale immigrant form of *Eurois occulta* is several times more frequent than *Peridroma saucia*. *Pieris rapae* (occasional singles, but not every year) is a far scarcer visitor to my garden than *Vanessa atalanta* (31 on the *Buddleia* at once on 29.viii.97, with a further 18 on the line of sugared fenceposts just across the road – though this was exceptional). It took eight years to find the first *P. rapae* larva on our garden cabbages. This pupated successfully under a windowsill, only to be snatched from literally under my nose by a particularly bold male Great Tit, frustrating my desire to see how well it survived the winter. No doubt it was a “first” for the Great Tit too.

#### Deletion from the Banffshire list

*Hepialus lupulinus* L. – The only record has now been withdrawn by the observer.

This species seems to be absent from north-east Scotland as a whole.

#### Additions to the Banffshire list

*Zygaena exulans* (Hohen.) – Loch Builg (OS grid reference NJ10), one in July 1976 (RA per MRY). Considered a windblown stray from the South Aberdeenshire sites, but there may well be undiscovered colonies in Banffshire, as much apparently suitable habitat exists.

*Sesia bembeciformis* (Hb.) – Ordiquhill, NJ55, common amongst *Salix* carr, but overlooked until 1993.

*Epirrhoe galiata* (D.&S.) – Inland on limestone at Inchrory, NJ10, in 1977, 1980 & 1997 (MRY, DAB), and at Tomintoul, NJ11, in 1993 (MRY).

*Entephria flavicinctata* (Hb.) – Tomintoul, NJ10, in 1993 (MRY).

*Eupithecia tenuiata* (Hb.) – Aberchirder, NJ55, August 1984 (LWH); Banff, NJ66, 1989 & 1996; Ordiquhill, NJ55, 1990-97, but originally misidentified as *E. subfuscata* Gen. II (Leverton, 1993). Specimens are very grey (*cinerae* Gregson) and do not appear until August.

*E. trisignaria* H.-S. – Ordiquhill, NJ55, male to m.v. on 21.vii.96.

*Itame brunneata* (Thunb.) – Glen Fiddich, NJ33, two on 30.vii.96 (DAB).

*Gnophos obscuratus* (D.&S.) – Macduff, NJ76, fairly common 29.vii.94 (DAB, RL).

*Tyria jacobaeae* (L.) – Ordiquhill, NJ55, male to m.v. on 26.v.95. Clearly a stray, at least 80km from a known breeding area.

*Agrotis clavis* (Hufn.) – “Banffshire coast”, one, July 1993 (RK-J).

*Standfussiana lucernea* (L.) “Banffshire coast”, July 1993 (RK-J); Macduff, NJ76. several, 26.viii.93 (PW, DAB, RL).

*Noctua orbona* (Hufn.) Ordiquhill, NJ55, male to m.v. on 3.viii.94. Unfortunately, I trod on it, much to the amusement of my friends. Now in coll. MRY.

*Peridroma saucia* (Hb.) Ordiquhill, NJ55, singles on 8.viii.95 & 3.x.97. Only two at the site, 1990-97, compared with ca. 55 *Agrotis ipsilon* Hufn.

*Xestia alpicola alpina* Humph. & Westw. Ben Rinnes, NJ23, larvae and pupae, June 1996 (MRY, RL, DAB). Moths resembled the Aviemore form.

*Hadena confusa* (Hufn.) – Findochty, NJ46, larvae on sea campion, 17.vii.96. Moth bred.

*Tholera cespitis* (D.&S.) – The Cabrach, NJ33, 1983 (JM).

*Dichonia aprilina* (L.) – Ordiquhill, NJ55, male to m.v. on 30.ix.97.

*Celaena leucostigma* (Hb.) – Ordiquhill, NJ55, singles at sugar, 14.viii.95 & 2.ix.96. Not thought to be resident in north-east Scotland, so presumed migrants.

*Catocala fraxini* (L.) – Ordiquhill, NJ55, male ab. *moerens* Fuchs to m.v. on 10.ix.95.

### Other notable records

*Inachis io* (L.) – Ordiquhill, NJ55, one on *Buddleia*, 15.viii.97 (JL). Thought to be the first record for Banffshire this century.

*Eulithis mellinata* (Fabr.) – Ordiquhill, NJ55, female to m.v. on 9.viii.96.

*Deilephila elpenor* (L.) – Ordiquhill, NJ55, now almost annual, and up to three per night in some years. Perhaps established.

*Cryphia domestica* (Hufn.) – Banff, NJ66, one on shop window, 16.viii.96. At perhaps its northernmost limit in Britain.

### Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the following observers for submitting records, which are identified by initials. The are R. Allen, D.A. Barbour, L.W. Hardwick, R. Knill-Jones, James Leverton, Joan Morgan, Paul Waring and M.R. Young.

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### More Early Greys

With regard to Roger Morris' Early Grey *Xylocampa areola* (Esper) at Mitcham, Surrey on 11 January 1998 (*Ent. Rec.* **110**: 168) I myself would have regarded this as an "odd man out", derived from a microhabitat which must abound in the urban area. A species capable of feeding on cultivated honeysuckles might well find itself pupating in a "hot spot" unlikely to occur in a natural woodland environment. For example, my own records of 1982 at Hampstead show 27 trapped from 8 February to 29 May, though only two were prior to 21 April when the species began to turn up regularly. Again the following year one turned up on 30 March but the main influx began on 29 April.

However, my records, beginning in the late 1970s, do show fairly consistently earlier appearance dates over the long term, though I would regard even a twenty years period to be dominated by short term factors. My 1981 to 1985 records, ignoring the "odd man out", match Mr Morris' in being all 1 April but from 1980 the dates of first appearance have been almost consistently in March. The latest date in this period was 7 April (1996).—RAYMOND A. SOFTLY, 12 Parliament Court, Parliament Hill, Hampstead, London NW3 2TS.

### Six-belted Clearwing *Bembecia ichneumoniformis* D.&S.) (= *scopigera* auct.) (Lep.: Sesiidae) in south-east London

As late as 1993 (Plant, *Larger moths of the London Area*: 12) the Six-belted Clearwing could be noted, in the London area, as an extremely local species restricted to the chalk. I was therefore quite astonished to sweep a male from a rough, grassy strip of ground with *Lotus corniculatus* (the foodplant) and other legumes, beside a path on Woolwich Common near here on 15 August 1998. However, Colin Plant was able to inform me that this moth has undergone a very marked increase in this part of the south-east, though most of the records so far were from the north side of the River Thames.—A.A. ALLEN, 49 Montcalm Road, Charlton, London SE7 8QG.